



DISTRACTED DRIVING AND COVER UP, OUR POLICE OFFICERS??

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DISTRACTED DRIVING: WHEN THOSE WE TRUST THE MOST CAUSE WRECKS, THEN COVER IT UP, WE ALL LOSE

Distracted cops have caused hundreds of accidents, for reasons ranging from spilling drinks in their cruisers to accidentally firing weapons through the floorboards. One study conducted in Denver, Colorado found that police officers were responsible for causing a staggering 308 preventable accidents, with state troopers causing another 219 in one year.

In one instance, a Boulder police officer hit a 21-year-old woman who was legally crossing an intersection on her bicycle, knocking her across the hood and onto the street. She suffered injuries to her back, legs and hips but didn't call for an ambulance because she had no insurance and couldn't afford the bill. The officer who hit her also didn't call for medical help, according to radio dispatch logs obtained by the station.

But when the woman later contacted the police department asking to be reimbursed for damages to her bike, she was sent a \$50 citation for not having a light on her bicycle.

In El Paso, Texas, a young woman, unfortunately knows the perils of going up against a certified peace officer. She, and several independent witnesses to a collision involving an El Paso Police Department vehicle, claim the El Paso police officer caused the crash, and even further, that the El Paso police officer and other officers with the El Paso police department fabricated statements in the accident report to blame an innocent woman.

The young woman says she was heading to drop someone off Friday night when she pulled up to the intersection of Fred Wilson Avenue and Dyer Street.

"The light was red, I had come to a stop, I was only there for about a few seconds and then it turned green and I barely started to accelerate," she said.

She said that's when an El Paso police officer, in an El Paso police department vehicle, came speeding through a red light, with no sirens or lights, and smashed into her car.

The young woman recalls seeing the police logo flash in front of her, giving her absolutely no time to react. She says that the officer was driving way too fast, and had no indications that he was going to an emergency call, like lights and sirens. She hit the drivers side of the El Paso police department's car, and then smashed into 2 other cars.

Then came the surprising part....

The official crash investigation report was done by an El Paso police officer by the name of

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Leilani Ramos. Instead of noting the woman's version, as verified by independent witnesses, she wrote that the woman was the one who ran the red light. The woman was even given a citation that that, AND, despite the fact that she had just accelerated into the intersection from a complete stop at a red light, the officer made sure to note that she was speeding as well.

Is this a case of cop protecting cop? The department covering for one of their own? What about those they have sworn to serve and protect?

The El Paso police department confirmed the officer involved in the crash had just graduated from the police academy in February of this year, and was transporting two women to jail in the back of his unit at the time of the crash.

One of those women, who asked to remain anonymous, said the crash was the fault of the police officer.

To further add questions to the officer's version and that of the crash report author, a clerk at a nearby gas station, said she witnessed the crash, and that it was the officer's fault, that he sped through a red light with no lights or sirens and crashed into the woman. She went even further to confirm that she sees El Paso police officers go through that same intersection all the time, speeding with no lights and sirens.

To add further suspicion to the officer's version, and that of the "official" El Paso police department crash report, written by a fellow officer, one of the drivers in one of the two cars that the woman hit after she was hit verified that the "Crash report" was wrong, he never stated that the woman was at fault, and he went further to say that he believed the officer who completed the report fabricated his statement.

The eyewitness driver was quoted as saying:

"In reality, I pulled up to the light going eastbound on Fred Wilson and I had my left blinker on, my light was red, the lights on Fred Wilson were green so all the lights on Dyer were red, and the cop was coming down Dyer, so there's no physical way that cop could've gotten hit if he didn't run the red light," he said. "To say that I said that the white car was coming at high speed and ran the red light and creamed everybody? That's completely inaccurate cause I never saw the white car until after it hit me."

He also said that he told the investigator all of this, and has no idea how his statements were twisted into something he says he never said to police.

"My opening statement when they asked me, I was like 'yes the cop ran the red light,' and they were like 'well do you think? Are you sure? Did you see?'" he said. "I had my windows down that night. There were no sirens, there was no overhead light, he just blew there, bad timing, bad judgment and it caused this crazy accident."

When asked again if he was confident his statement was fabricated, he replied "Yes, and it's not the first time I've seen it happen."

So what happens when police officers protect their own? What happens when they stand in unison, to fabricate stories so the department stays clean? We all lose. When we put the ultimate trust in the police to serve and protect, we give them the ultimate power as well. An abuse of that power not only hurts the citizens involved, it creates an environment of abuse that only serves to facilitate a police state, or a militarization of the police. We want to believe that police officers are our heroes, and will "cop" to their own mistakes or misjudgments. When the opposite happens, and officers attempt to cover up their mistakes, the public suffers.

We hold police officers and their departments accountable. Just as a citizen would be accountable to one of our police officers for negligence, so should the officer be held responsible and accountable for causing harms and losses to a citizen. We are here to make sure that happens, police departments stay honest, and their police officers stay honorable.

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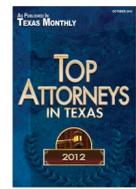
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